



STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
DARRELL V. MCGRAW, JR.
CONSUMER PROTECTION DIVISION
1-800-368-8808 or 304-558-8986

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE CONTACT: CHRISTOPHER HEDGES
1-800-368-8808
304-558-8986

**BEWARE OF USED FIRESTONE TIRES;
MICHIGAN MAN CHARGED WITH SELLING
DOUBLY-HAZARDOUS RECALLED MERCHANDISE**

Michigan law enforcement officials announced last Wednesday that Vernald Cole, of Remus, MI, has been charged with a felony for selling used Firestone tires. Cole allegedly acquired a cache of tires that were removed from vehicles as part of the 2001 recall by Firestone and Ford Motor Company and sold them to used tire dealers in other states. Consumers purchased the tires, having no idea they were recalls. The tires pose a much greater risk of blowout now than before they were exchanged.

As a result of the tire recall last summer, consumers took their vehicles to Firestone and Ford dealers for replacement. As each tire was removed under the voluntary replacement program, dealers gouged the tire with a special knife, removing the D.O.T. numbers from the sidewall, called "skiving." According to experts, these gashes in skived tires only increase their likelihood of blowout. Naturally, the recalled tires were not supposed to make their way back to the marketplace, but officials found that Cole had acquired thousands of them, and had put them up for sale.

Consumers purchasing Cole's tires were unaware they were buying recalls because evidence of skiving is difficult to see. The skived trench in the sidewall lies very close to the rim, usually on the inner-facing side of the tire.

Attorney General McGraw advises anyone who has purchased used tires within the past thirteen months, especially used Firestone tires, to have them inspected by a reputable tire dealer. Tires discovered to have been skived should be removed immediately to avoid a potential tragedy. Anyone finding skived Firestone tires should contact Attorney General McGraw's Consumer Protection Division at 1-800-368-8808 or 304-558-8986.

There have been no reports thus far of skived recalls being sold to West Virginia consumers. However, if Cole pulled off his alleged scam so easily in other states, consumers everywhere must be on the watch for this hazard. This is especially important since the summer traveling season will begin with Memorial Day, and many West Virginia families will be on the road over the holiday this weekend.

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